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Factors Influencing Learners' Participation in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop a model to assist in improving class participation of EFL learners. With the assistance of teachers' training sessions (TTS) pertaining to the hypothesized factors affecting the EFL learners' class participation, the study aimed to measure the learners' class participation before TTSs and after TTSs. The learners' class participation was measured via the adopted unpublished scale. The findings of the study concerning to the impact of hypothesized factors affecting the EFL learners' class participation reveal that the increased motivation and positive attitude of students lead them to increase their increased class participation. Similarly, their increased discomfort leads them to the decreased class participation. The results also suggest that anxious and shy students are more likely to participate in the EFL classrooms. The findings of the post TTSs are yet to incorporate if trained teachers can overcome such factors to make sure the increased class participation of EFL learners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Class Participation

One of the main facets of students' learning is very well explained in the theory of Students Involvement by Astin 1984. This theory explains about the influence of environment on the psychological and overall development of students. This theory not only serves as a guide to researchers but helps the administration and faculty of any educational institutions faculty to make their learning more effective. Students' participation inside classroom facilitates them to learn better and motivates them to express their ideas and beliefs and make other understand about it. Through questioning they gain information and improve their understanding about the topic. Class participation is equally effective for teachers also, as students' queries make teachers understand about students' perspective that how they assimilate particular topic taught, their questioning gives teachers a direction for planning their lessons so as to particularly focus on what students want to learn about, teachers can always organize their lesson plans accordingly (Astin,1984).

This project on class participation was based on the rationale as to how does the class participation effects students' interest, involvement and engagement towards their studies. Harackiewicz, et al., (1997) have proved this fact that the students' participation in their classroom is the reflection of their interest in studies. Class participation can be of many types, it could be in form of discussion, which, at its core, is about student engagement. Teachers can adopt innumerable ways to engage students in class. A proficient teacher can always adopt new innovative ideas, implementation of which makes students learning

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meaningful and beneficial. The outcome of which becomes evident in students' achievements (Jones, 2008).

Class Participation in EFL Classroom

In the context of English language teaching, one of the significant challenges faced by English Language Teachers (ELTs) is to pay attention to the classroom participation of learners. The term "Classroom Participation" refers to the presence of learners in the provided learning situation (Selanikyo, Yalon-Chamovitz & Weintraub, 2017). World Health Organization (2007) defines the term "participation" as the involvement of an individual in a life situation. However, Selanikyo et al., (2017), include the communication as one of the significant components for the Classroom Participation, which involves two factors including listening and expressing, the ability to receive verbal and nonverbal messages (Lunenburg, 2010). Rocca (2010) presents the operational definition of Classroom Participation as "in-class student participation" with three components including raising a hand, asking questions, and making comments. Thus, an effective English teacher is able to integrate such components in class to make the learners' participation successful.

Identifying a few techniques to be utilized by a language teacher, Wang (2014) figures out that displaying questions in the EFL classroom is an effective strategy to enhance the student participation to practice the target language. According to Warayet (2011), teachers are always intended to encourage their students to speak in EFL classroom. Although every student does not have the opportunity to participate orally, their participation is more often evaluated in accordance with the amount and quality of their talk. In the Pakistani context, students in EFL classrooms are often engaged in teacher-fronted activities having limited opportunities to speak in the target language and thus it is difficult for them to elicit. Being present in such classrooms means that they are less likely to participate during the ongoing activities (Sarwar, 2001). Hence, opportunities to participate in the oral discussion are very less though oral engagement is considered the main indicator of student participation.

Aims & Objectives

Considering the lack of opportunities for EFL students to class participation, this study aims to develop a model to assist in improving class participation of EFL learners. From this perspective, this study experiments the designed model if it increases the level of EFL learners' class participation. Furthermore, the developed model would also be beneficial for the ELTs to assess their teaching strategies if complied with the rules set for active class participation.

Research Questions

To what extent the designed model – Learners' Class Participation Model (LCPM) does assist in increasing EFL learners' class participation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Impact of Motivation on Students' Classroom Participation

Dancer and Kamvounias, (2005) recognized the fact that communication in groups situation is an important skill required by university graduates. There has been increasing interest and use of the assessment of student participation in class discussion. Despite the increase in its use there has been very little study of this mode of assessment. There has, however, been much discussion in many departments on the value of its use and, in particular, concern expressed as to the problems of subjectivity and reliability and its adverse effect on class discussion. This paper explores some of the issues involved in assessing students' participation in class discussion, the reasons for its use, its limitations and ways it can be used more effectively.

Amongst the most practiced pedagogical strategies classroom discussion is one of the most frequently used one. According to this study those students who are less inclined to class voluntarily, the instructors used different strategies like participation grades, extra marks or high ranks. However, student responses indicated that required/ graded participation, incorporating ideas and experiences, active facilitation, asking effective questions, supportive classroom environment, are those strategies which can motivate students to class participation (Dallimore, Hertenstein, & Platt, 2004). The most important aspect amongst students in classroom participation is motivations, the positive or negative effects of which engages or disengage students in class. Their emotional or behavioural dissatisfaction is dependent on their motivation whether intrinsic or extrinsic. (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009).

Impact of Attitude on Students' Classroom Participation

The literature on impact of students' attitude on classroom performance suggest significant relationships between these two variables. Erdogan, Bayram, & Deniz (2008) states that the positive or negative attitudes of students towards teaching learning experiences could increase or decrease their overall classroom achievements. Erdogan et al (2008) defines two main factors that contribute to students' attitude that are psychological and sociological. Psychological factors refer to the patterns of behaviour that a student's exhibits and sociological factors relates with the relationships and environment of student. These factors are correlated and are dependent on each other (Awang, et al., 2013).

Impact of Anxiety on Students' Classroom Participation

While learning a second language, learners are supposed to acquire the techniques used in the culture by native people of such language. According to Abderrezag (2010), learming such techniques can be sometimes threatening to the consciousness of a learners rather encouraging them to perform well. Brown (2007) describes it as Language Anxiety in which learners feel fear while using the second language being not fully proficient. According to Brown (2007), language anxiety is a stable personality trait which

is associated with the tendency of individual to react nervously while writing, reading, listening, or speaking in the second language.

Impact of Discomfort on Students' Classroom Participation

According to Linsin (2017), students do not participate in the discussions take place in classroom particularly those who feel discomfort while speaking in front of a complete class. The discomfort in a language class can be seen in certain circumstances such as a grammar lesson in which any grammatical element is going on may cause a student to be discomfort and even sometimes terror. A study conducted by Ely (1986) reveals that "Language Class Discomfort influenced Classroom Participation only indirectly, through its negative effect on Language Class Risktaking" (p. 20). Nevertheless, a student of a group or students learning in an EFL class may feel discomfort which may lead them to lose their participation in the class.

Impact of Shyness on Students' Classroom Participation

Shyness presents emotional, social, and academic challenges for children. Specifically, shy children may be at risk for many negative outcomes such as school adjustment problems, negative effect, peer rejection, and loneliness (Coplan et al., 2008; Findlay et al., 2009). In an EFL classroom based on communication purposes in which students need to use English language as a tool for communication, shy students are at a great disadvantage. Speaking in front of others is a difficult task for them. They have a negative picture about themselves that will affect on their motivation to speak also Shy person may hesitate, make a lot of pauses, or even escape from the situation (Namaghi,2015).

Conceptual Framework

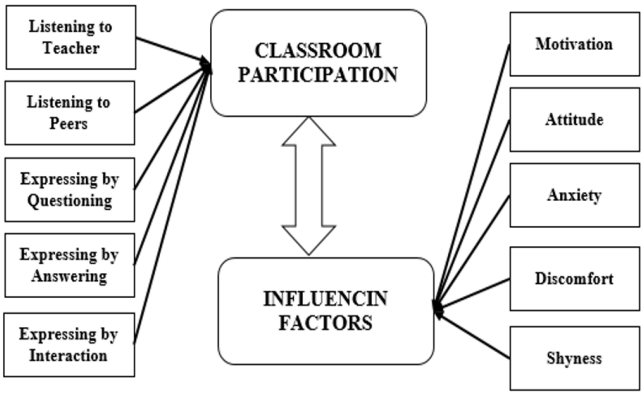

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Mixed Method design was used for this study. The data was gathered using questionnaire and interview guide from the participants. The researcher selected an elementary public sector school in heart of Karachi city's Sadder area then researcher targeted Class 8th students. Subsequently, the researcher visited the public sector school to share a consent letter to the principal of selected public sector school and ask permission to collect the data 'regarding EFL teachings. The school principal was very humble and a cooperative lady she granted the permission to conduct the data the next day of permission Afterwards, at a pre-arranged time and accompanied to the target class teachers researchers collected the pre test data of English subject from students of eight classes.

The selection of schools was based on convenient sampling technique. Nevertheless, the researchers made sure to select only middle social economic schools and approached only the students of grade 7 and 8 to measure their current level of class participation in the EFL classrooms, which was measured via the scale developed by Sarwar (2019) (See Appendix C). On the other hand, the principals were requested to invite the only teachers who are currently teaching in the respective schools to the selected students. The participants were also interviewed for the phenomenon under study. The gathered data was analysed with the help of employing various statistical tests using SPSS by splitting into two different phases including descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The gathered data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

4. RESULTS & FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 displays the characteristics of the responding students participated in the current study. From this perspective, the total number of participating students was 267 among them 20 (7.5 per cent) students were currently studying in a Non-Elite School, 112 (41.5 per cent) students were currently studying in Middle Schools, and 135 (50.6 per cent) students were currently studying in Elite Schools. The number of female students was 143 (53.6 per cent), while the number of male students was 124 (46.4 per cent). A significant number of students were in grade 8 (216 = 80.9 per cent). Similarly, the highest number of students were aged between 13 and 15 (196 = 73.4 per cent).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

School Category		
	Frequency	Percent
Non-Elite School/s	20	7.5
Middle School/s	112	41.9
Elite School/s	135	50.6
Students' Gender		
Female	143	53.6
Male	124	46.4
Students' Academic Grade		
Grade 7	51	19.1
Grade 8	216	80.9
Students' Age Groups		
	Frequency	Percent
10-12	60	22.5
13-15	196	73.4
16-18	11	4.1
Total	267	100.0

Table 2 displays the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution of the received responses, having acceptable variance and other properties.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Responses

		LT	LP	EQ	EA	EI	MOT	ATT	ANX	DIS	SHY
N	Valid	267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.51	3.20	3.32	2.90	3.33	3.46	2.88	2.78	2.98	2.95
Std. Error of Mean		0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.06
Median		3.57	3.13	3.20	2.80	3.45	3.57	2.80	2.75	2.89	2.83
Mode		3.71	3.13	3.20	2.80	3.73	3.57	2.60	2.38	2.78	2.50a
Std. Deviation		0.71	0.68	0.72	0.82	0.70	0.80	0.83	0.74	0.81	0.93
Variance		0.50	0.46	0.52	0.67	0.49	0.64	0.69	0.54	0.65	0.86
Skewness		0.03	-0.01	-0.04	0.38	-0.12	-0.36	0.25	0.70	0.45	0.18
Std. Error of Skewness		0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
Kurtosis		-0.89	-0.10	-0.52	-0.45	-0.90	-0.76	-0.34	0.55	-0.16	-0.43
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30
Range		3.14	3.75	3.60	3.80	3.00	3.71	3.80	3.50	4.00	4.00
Minimum		1.86	1.25	1.40	1.20	1.82	1.14	1.20	1.38	1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.82	4.86	5.00	4.88	5.00	5.00
Sum		936.86	854.00	886.20	774.60	890.36	925.00	769.80	742.25	795.78	788.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

LT = Listening to Teacher
LP = Listening to Peers
EQ = Expressing by Questioning
EA = Expressing by Answering
EI = Expressing by Interaction
MOT = Motivation
ATT = Attitude
ANX = Anxiety
DIS = Discomfort
SHY = Shyness

Inferential Analysis

Reliability & Validity

Having the large data set, the normality in the data was assumed perfect and thus the normality test was not run. Table 3 displays the internal consistency of the items, measured in two stages (the pilot testing and the final testing) to check the reliability of the instrument used to gather the data from the sampled respondents. The internal consistency between the items against each construct, in both stages, was found reliable and thus the instrument was declared as reliable for the further process. Nevertheless, the items EQ2, EQ3, and EQ5 in the construct EQ and the item EA5 in the construct EA were found as problematic, reducing the internal consistency between the other items, and thus such items were removed in this stage.

Table 3
Internal Consistency

	Pilot Test	N of Items	Final Test	N of Items	Items Removed
LT	.717	7	.648	7	No item
LP	.614	8	.611	8	No item
EQ	.494	5	.563	2	EQ2, EQ3, EQ5
EA	.433	5	.615	4	EA5
EI	.805	11	.762	11	No item
MOT	.694	7	.720	7	No item
ATT	.507	5	.583	5	No item
ANX	.602	8	.622	8	No item
DIS	.693	9	.751	9	No item
SHY	.788	6	.735	6	No item

Pre-Teachers Training Scores of Learners' Class Participation

The scores of learners' class participations were measured via one sample T-Test. Table 4 displays the average score of leaners' class participation in both perspectives i.e. on individual construct and all together.

Table 4
Average Score of Class Participation

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LT	267	3.5088	.70650	.04324
LP	267	3.1985	.67934	.04158
EQ	267	3.3191	.72323	.04426
EA	267	2.9011	.81736	.05002
EI	267	3.3347	.70232	s.04298
Overall Class Participation	267	3.2525	.52979	.03242

Table 5 displays the average score of leaners' class participation in the perspective that if 2.5 (50 per cent) score is assumed as satisfactory class participation. From this viewpoint, it was found that the participated leaners' class participation was satisfactory in both perspectives i.e. on individual construct and all together ($p < .05$).

Table 5
Class Participation Significance

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 2.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
LT	23.333	266	.000	1.00883	.9237	1.0940
LP	16.801	266	.000	.69850	.6166	.7804
EQ	18.506	266	.000	.81910	.7320	.9062
EA	8.019	266	.000	.40112	.3026	.4996
EI	19.420	266	.000	.83470	.7501	.9193
Overall Class Participation	23.207	266	.000	.75245	.6886	.8163

Testing Hypotheses

Backward regression using SPSS package version 22 was employed to test the hypotheses. Table 6 depicts the overall impact of independent variables (factors) on the dependent variable (class participation). The R value shows the multiple correlation coefficient (.762), which means that with the change in the independent variables (Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, Discomfort, and Shyness), the dependent variable (class participation) changes regardless of negatively or positively increase. The value of .762 indicates a significant level of prediction. The R2 value in second row shows the coefficient of determination (.581 = 58.1 per cent), which is the proportion of variance brought by the independent variables in the dependent variable.

Table 6
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.762a	.581	.573	.36164
a. Predictors: (Constant), Shyness, Motivation, Attitude, Discomfort, Anxiety				

The ANOVA table (Table 7) shows the fitness of the model to regress. The F ratio in the model shows that the independent variables (Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, Discomfort, and Shyness) statistically significantly predict the dependent variable (class participation), F (5, 261) = 72.409, p < .0005. This can be interpreted in other words as the regression model is a good fit of the data.

Table 7
ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.351	5	9.470	72.409	.000b
	Residual	34.135	261	.131		
	Total	81.486	266			
a. Dependent Variable: Classroom Participation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, Discomfort, Shyness						

The coefficient table (table 8) displays the impact of each construct (factor) on the classroom participation of the participated students. The equation can be stated as:

Predicted Classroom Participation = 1.221 + (.352 x Motivation) + (.123 x Attitude) + (.153 x Anxiety) - (.070 x Discomfort) + (.092 x Shyness

Hence, it is safe to state that the variables Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, and Shyness added statistically significant and positive impact to the predicted Performance, p < .05 whereas the variable Discomfort added statistically significant and negative impact to the predicted Performance, p < .05. Therefore, the results conclude that with the increase of Motivation and Attitude the class participation of students will increase; however, with the increase of Discomfort the class participation of students will decrease.

Table 8
Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.221	.117		10.438	.000		
	Motivation	.352	.034	.507	10.357	.000	.670	1.493
	Attitude	.123	.037	.185	3.301	.001	.513	1.948
	Anxiety	.153	.045	.203	3.423	.001	.458	2.185
	Discomfort	-.070	.039	-.101	-1.769	.078*	.488	2.049
	Shyness	.092	.032	.154	2.917	.004	.574	1.741
a. Dependent Variable: Classroom Participation * Sig value was taken as p < .10 in backward regression								

Table 9 reveals the overall status of the all variables in terms of their acceptance or rejection.

Table 9
Summary of Hypotheses

No.	Hypotheses	Sig value	Status
H1	Motivation of students has no significant impact on their class participation	.000	Rejected
H2	Positive attitude of students has no significant impact on their class participation	.001	Rejected
H3	Anxiety of students has no significant impact on their class participation	.001	Rejected
H4	Discomfort of students has no significant impact on their class participation	.078*	Rejected
H5	Shyness of students has no significant impact on their class participation	.004	Rejected

Discussion

The purpose of the project to discover various influential factors (Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, Discomfort and Shyness) found in Pre-test results of participants. The study found that that with the increase of Motivation and Attitude the class participation of students will increase; however, with the increase of Discomfort the class participation of students will decrease. Nevertheless, the results also show that with the increase of Anxiety and Shyness the class participation of students will increase .Therefore EFL teacher's communication variables play an important role in shaping classroom interaction. This likely reveals that classroom interaction can be the language pedagogy that best facilitates language learning since it maximizes opportunities of the speakers to create dialogic spaces (Yule, 2006).

The finding also supports pedagogical factors like the course, topic, lecturer and teaching style could influence students' participation. The Findings have shown that classmates' traits are also influential in encouraging or discouraging classroom participation. The Educators play a pivotal role in encouraging participation by accepting all contributions made in class as important. Therefore, the results conclude that by increasing motivation anxiety and discomfort and shyness decreases among students so the workshops were designed to conduct to train the EFL teachers to play a very prominent role in attracting the student's attention by creating interest among the students. A Teacher should play various roles such as Learner, Facilitator, Assessor, Manager and Evaluator (Archana, 2016).

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

It is quite evident from the pre test results of this study that the independent variables like Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety, Discomfort and Shyness are proved to be highly influencing factors on the dependent variable Class Participation. The increase of motivation & positive attitude improve class participation, however, with the increase of discomfort the students' class participation decreases. Also, the increase in anxiety and shyness decrease the class participation. After conducting a pre-test, it is quite evident that it is the responsibility of an English language teacher to understand how stressful it becomes for students to communicate and learn this language, whose native language is other than English. The discomfort and tension then becomes a call for an English language teaching profession (Horwitz, 2001: 122). We cannot conclude it as saying that such students are lazy, lethargic, and demotivated or having poor attitude (Gregersen, 2003), when in actual they are suffering from anxiety. Instead, a better label for them is anxious learners and through interventions they can overcome the anxiety for foreign language. (Aida, 1994). It has also been found out that negative attitude towards learning English language is the direct impact of lack of motivation and has an adverse effect on students overall personality. Which not only makes students shy but increase discomfort amongst them, they become less confident in their oral expressions in front of their peers. Consistency in low ability, in written and oral expression of English language leaves a long lasting negative impact on their behaviour, resultantly they lose interest in English language learning process. Therefore, the conduct of teachers training workshops were an imperative activity to reflect upon students' motivation and interest. It was expected that after conducting these workshops, a significant positive impact could be seen in their attitude which could reduce their discomfort and shyness.

Recommendations

On the basis of pre-test results following recommendations can be made:

- Teachers training should be the constant feature for teachers teaching English language, which can equip them with modern methodologies in order to overcome the problems, students face as lack of motivation or showing low self-esteem and lose their self-confidence.
- To incorporate project work as it provide anxious and non-anxious students alike with abundant opportunities to use language in a non-threatening context.
- To reduce students' shyness, some speaking activities with students can be conducted in which they get the chance to express themselves orally as students are more eager to participate in oral activities in small groups (Young, 1990). This is the reason project work is tasked where students are provided with equal opportunities to perform.
- The creation of a friendly classroom atmosphere also plays a pivotal role in building their mutual relationship and is very supportive. Written task like essay or creative writing can also enhance students interest in which language errors are considered as natural in the process of language acquisition, without overcorrection which can "draw students' attention away from communication and toward a focus on form and accuracy" (Gregersen, 2003: 31)
- Teachers' motivation in the conduct of lesson can also be instrumental in helping anxious students overcome their perception of low ability and fear of negative evaluation which increase discomfort and shyness.
- Post training survey is highly recommended, which can prove the effectiveness of teachers training workshops.

Finally, the teachers approach as a researcher in the classroom is an invaluable tool. As this approach, will compel teachers to apply both theory and practice. The best example is an action research where teachers can always apply new techniques and methodologies in order to assess its results in form of students' achievements through formative assessments. It can positively affect English teachers on their professional development as well as on students' anxiety levels, motivation in language acquisition.

Conflict interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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